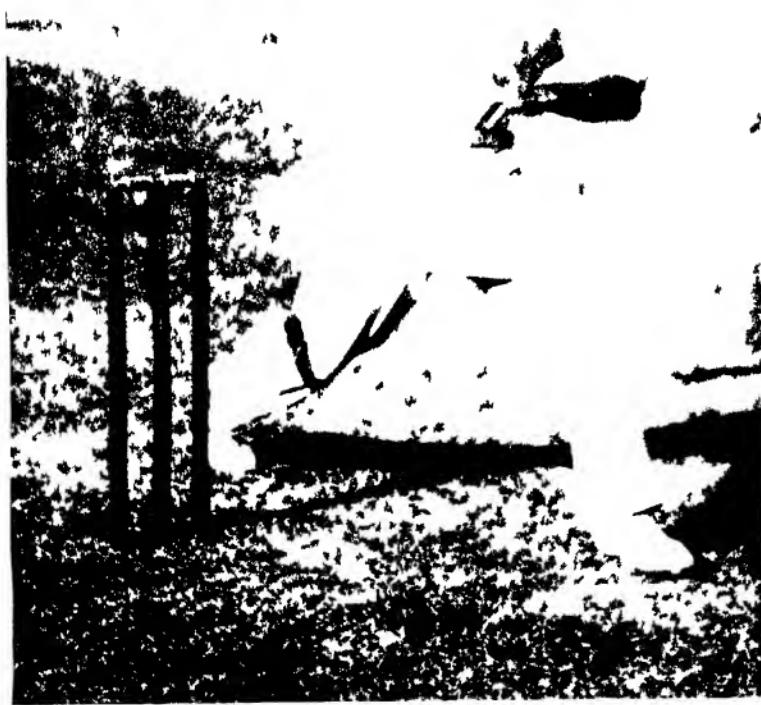
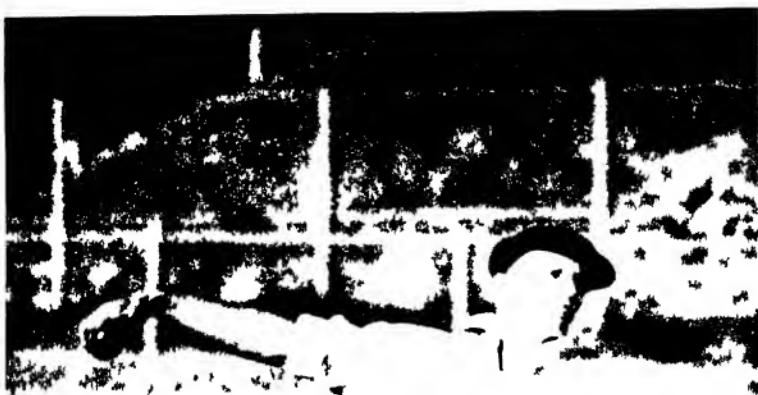


GETTING WICKETS

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John Gummere Jr.

Getting Wickets

By
C. V. GRIMMETT

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON
ST. PAUL'S HOUSE
WARWICK SQUARE
E. C. 4
1930

DEDICATED
TO
BOWLERS
THE CINDERELLAS OF CRICKET

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This, my first book, has literally been produced by the sweat of the brow, for the greater part of it took shape in the sticky atmosphere of the Indian Ocean and of summer time in the Red Sea—scarcely congenial conditions in which to experience the throes of authorship. I am, therefore, the more grateful to Mr. G. E. F. Tebbutt, of the Australian Press Association, who has "seen it through" with me, and whose assistance has been most valuable.

INTRODUCTORY

BOWLING : THE NEGLECTED ART

BOWLING is the fascinating art to which I devote this little volume. Its mission, in addition to being one of instruction, is to restore something of balance to the scales of cricket, at present sadly tilted in the popular mind towards the more spectacular side of the game—batting. From the highly-decorative covers of schoolboys' annuals to the more matter-of-fact atmosphere of the sporting columns of the newspapers, the batsman is the symbol and standard of cricket. It has become the fashion to regard the century-maker as the man who gets the lion's share of enjoyment from the game, and the exponent of the phase of it which alone deserves the world's applause.

Far be it from me to despise batting.

I would be less than human—were it within my capacity to go out and make a hundred in a Test match against some of the best bowling in the world—if I did not at times covet the skill and power of a great batsman. But the bowler *does* get his share of thrill from the great game. I should rank the measure of elation at the cheap dismissal of a champion batsman as being at least equal to the joy of achievement that same batsman feels when he overcomes the attack of the bowlers and sees another panel of the scoring board come to life with the magic third figure.

It is because I want more men, particularly young men, to see in bowling something more than the mere means of making a batsman's holiday that I now do my best to convey some idea of the hold which bowling can obtain on those who make a thorough study of it. The tricks of the bowling trade—and I confess that we “googly” merchants have built up our measure of cricket prosperity

on false pretences and the deliberate deception of our rivals the batsmen—are many, and I feel that, if I can enlighten willing pupils on some of them, I will have done my share in encouraging that department of the game to which, from boyhood, I have devoted myself.

In dedicating this volume to the Cinderellas of Cricket, I hope that some of the labour I have spent upon it will go a little way towards the fashioning of the gilded coach that will some day, I believe, carry bowlers into their own.

C. V. GRIMMETT.

MIDLAND GRAND HOTEL,
ST. PANCRAS,
LONDON.

May, 1930.

UNDER MANY CAPS: POINTS FROM A LONG AND VARIED CRICKET CAREER

CHAPTER 1

UNDER MANY CAPS: POINTS FROM A LONG AND VARIED CRICKET CAREER

I STARTED cricket as a small boy on the Basin Reserve, Wellington, New Zealand, where I lived alongside the ground and was associated with a family named Harris, each of the sons being leg-break bowlers, the eldest having retired before I began to take any interest in the game.

To this family I am much indebted for some of my later success. We were always to be found on the Reserve, and, naturally, I learned to bowl leg-breaks almost as soon as I started to play. I was in the natural environment, and could not do other than delve into the intricacies of spin bowling.

Nevertheless, I started off as a fast bowler, and was reasonably successful.

My ideas of bowling differed much from what they are now. The thought that I would be punished if I bowled slow breaks was exploded in my very early days.

At school practice, arranged as in a match, each boy batting and bowling in turn, and all the others fielding, we had had a round when the master asked me again to take a turn with the ball. Feeling a little weary, or perhaps in a mischievous spirit, I ran to the wicket and bowled a leg-break, which completely beat the batsman. My master called me to him and asked if I had tried to do this. On explaining to him that I could break a ball whenever I liked, but was afraid to do it in a match, he straightway forbade me ever to bowl fast again.

Some little time after this, I played in a schools' match with this same teacher as umpire. After umpiring while my side batted, he was forced to leave to meet one of his brothers arriving by steamer.

Immediately he was out of sight, the boy in me asserted himself, and I commenced to hurl them in as fast as possible.

Whether by good luck or good management, I am not able to say, but I finished with an average of seven wickets for three runs ! They fell like ninepins, and I distinctly remember one unhappy boy who, thinking a ball would "kick," attempted to duck, with the result that he collapsed after receiving the ball on his head, and was counted out. My appeal for leg-before was upheld, so it is not always advisable to use your head !

The outcome of this effort was that I was selected to represent Wellington (New Zealand) schools against the Wairarapa schools. As luck would have it, the same master was umpire, and, under his eye, I was forced to bowl leg-breaks. The match proved to me the value of this kind of bowling. My averages for the game were six for 5 and eight for 1 ! I am afraid my opponents had

not played against a bowler of my type before, and were all at sea.

From this time my interest was increased, I started to study spin, and found a wonderful lot of pleasure in occasionally being able to deceive a good batsman. I always remember my first try-out against an experienced player after I had mastered the ball that goes straight through with over-spin.

Bowling to him a few fairly good leg-breaks, I sent along an over-spinner and completely beat him. He seemed so surprised that later, when I got another "into" him, he became quite excited and left his wicket to come up to me and ask if it had been an accident ! On demonstrating to him that it was not, and that I could control it pretty well, he then and there assured me I had a ball that was a certain wicket-getter, and one I should keep in my locker. Many times since I have remembered his words, and my over-spinner remains.

Playing in the school team, I had

success both as bowler and batsman, and, always keen on fielding, I simply lived for the game. After leaving school I gave up cricket for a couple of seasons, the change from school to business causing me to take only a passing interest in the game.

I was then sought after by a Y.M.C.A. club to play in what was called "boys' league" cricket, the competitors being boys who had not long left school, and were not sufficiently matured to play against men. They had some difficulty in persuading me to play, but the call was too strong, and I started again.

While getting near the top of the bowling average, I also managed to secure batting trophies, not only for the club, but for the whole of the league. One of the trophies was a bat—the first I ever possessed.

There were some fine players in the making in this team. Later, the authorities recognised its talent, and entered the team in the men's senior competition.

The team consisted of six or seven boys, reinforced by experienced men. The side did fairly well throughout the season, although winning only one match. The experience gained, however, was invaluable.

It was remarkable that most of those six or seven boys eventually entered provincial cricket—the New Zealand equivalent of County cricket—some played for New Zealand, and I myself played for Australia. What a tribute to the foresight of the gentleman who early recognised our potential ability!

The following season the introduction of “district” cricket meant that the team had to disband, and I was forced to play in the district in which I resided—Wellington East. It was at this time that I learned to bowl the “bosie” or “googly”—an off-break with a leg-break action.

I had practised it regularly and frequently throughout the winter, having discovered the idea from a magazine

article which said that a bowler playing on sandy soil and bowling leg-breaks found, after a time, that he was going "straight through," and not turning the ball. Later, the writer said, he started to bowl an off-break, and, investigating the reason, found that, as he bowled, he was gradually digging a hole where his left foot landed. This caused him to sink down lower on that side; consequently, his shoulder dropped, allowing the ball to come out of the "back" of his hand. Instead of a leg-break, the ball broke the opposite way.

I studied this idea for hours, and, bowling with my left shoulder well down, I at last managed to get the ball to break from the off. Practising also with a soft ball, underarm, helped me, and, next season, I kept practising it at a short distance, as I at first found it difficult to send the ball full length. Gradually increasing the length of the ball, I was able at last to bowl it fairly well. Although I put in hours of practice

at this ball, I always, before I finished, had ten minutes at bowling my ordinary leg-break, so that I should not lose control of it. In this way I maintained the standard of my bowling, and also learned to bowl a ball that was destined to get many wickets.

This should be a reminder to those many bowlers who, over-anxious to try something new, allow their stock ball to fall into the discard, and so find themselves without the ability consistently to send down any variety of delivery.

Through having to play for the district in which I resided or give up the game altogether, I nearly chose the latter course. The club to which I was attached was one of the strongest in the competition and had two teams. At first I played in the second team, but, after a few games, was selected for the first eleven. This side was particularly strong, both in batting and bowling, and usually declared with a few wickets down, which meant that I rarely got a chance to bat.

They also dismissed their opponents cheaply, so that I was not given the ball.

This went on for some time, and my enthusiasm waned. I asked to be allowed to return to the second team, but the request was refused. I decided to give up the game, but was persuaded to continue playing. It was in the final match that I got the opportunity of a try-out, and registered a good performance. Incidentally, this was the first match in which I bowled a "googly."

The regular bowlers had little success, and, to my surprise, I was put on, securing the only five wickets that fell. The match proved my ability, which was at last recognised, and next season I represented Wellington province against Auckland province. From then until I left New Zealand for Sydney, I did not miss playing in the provincial side, either in Plunket Shield games or against visiting Australian teams.

In the match against Auckland I

bowled remarkably well for a first appearance, but as the analysis was none for 65, my disappointment was great. It was softened by the hearty congratulations everywhere offered me. In the next innings I secured four wickets for 48.

Next season a New Zealand team was selected to tour Australia and I almost gained inclusion, being chosen as a reserve bowler. Nobody, however, dropped out, and my ambition to play for New Zealand was not fulfilled. In all, I played in district cricket in Wellington three seasons, at the end of which time, my apprenticeship being ended, I migrated to Sydney at the age of twenty.

I joined Sydney District Cricket Club, starting the season with the third-grade team, my performances being 13 for 65, and 57 runs and 61 runs, in the first match. That brought promotion to the second-grade eleven, and I played with them until nearly the end of the season, securing thirty-five wickets. I was chosen

to represent combined second-grade against New South Wales school teachers, who could field a very fine side.

In my first match in second-grade cricket in Sydney, my team batted on the first Saturday, the second was wet, and I did not get a chance to bowl. The second match was against Mosman, on their own ground, where we lost the toss and fielded at a temperature of 105° in the shade. I had just arrived from the cooler country of New Zealand, and had to face a day like that! However, I recorded what, I think, was one of my best performances. The total was about 400 for nine wickets, of which I took six for 165. I wondered what I had struck, for this Mosman eleven was good enough for any first-grade side.

To bowl in such heat and on such a wicket is a very severe test, and anyone unaccustomed to them would find it difficult to keep going.

Through the illness of a member of the first eleven, I was asked to attend at the

Sydney Cricket Ground to play against Redfern. Imagine my feelings ! To me, the far-famed Sydney ground was like an enchanted arena, and it had been far from my dreams that ever I would tread the turf of this, the finest field I have ever been on.

In this game, I was associated with H. L. Collins, captain of the 1926 Australians, with whom I first toured England. I remember him giving me advice about my opponents through which I profited on at least one occasion. The Redfern side included Arthur Mailey. It was a great match for me, as I took 12 wickets for 65 runs.

I consider that I had my fair share of luck, but the opportunity presented was firmly grasped. Thus, in my first season in Sydney—1914-15—I established myself in the first eleven after having commenced in third-grade. My average, too, was remarkable, in that I secured 28 wickets, costing only 10 runs each, and was second on the list of bowling



Photo Knobell Studio - Elstree

C. V. CHIMMIE AT THE FINISH OF A LEG BREAK DELIVERY

averages for the whole grade. Altogether in the season, I took 76 wickets.

During my next season in Sydney, I secured more than 60 wickets, and had a batting average of 25 for 19 innings, two being unfinished, and 41 was my highest score. I did not play quite so well in the following year, but did sufficient to justify my retention in the team. It was just after my first season in Sydney that I took up baseball, which kept me fit during the winter.

In 1917, I went to Melbourne, and threw in my lot with South Melbourne, a club, by the way, that must rank as one of the finest in the world. There I was again associated with the late J. V. Saunders, with whom I had played in New Zealand, and his advice to me was valuable.

My first season was so successful that I secured the bowling average in Melbourne pennant cricket with 40 wickets, and was also selected to represent Victoria in my first Sheffield Shield match,

played at Sydney. It was a disappointment to me. In the first innings, E. A. McDonald and Bert Ironmonger dismissed New South Wales for 89, so I was not put on to bowl. In the second, New South Wales wanted 396 to win, and got the runs for the loss of four wickets. I was given only five overs in the match, in the second of which I lost a wicket by a missed chance of stumping, and failed to get a victim.

I continued to do well with South Melbourne, and got 41 wickets in my second season, just missing the best average. In my third season there, I again took 40 wickets, and this time had the best average for the club.

Meanwhile I had been selected to play against Tasmania and A. C. MacLaren's amateurs, as well as in second eleven matches with New South Wales and, in each, had average success. I also played against Johnny Douglas's M.C.C. side in 1920-21, but fortune did not smile on me, a ball from Parkin injuring

one of my legs, and laming me for the rest of the match. Nevertheless, I scored 30 not out. I had my first bowl when Hendren was 96 not out. He eventually got more than 200, but was missed in the outfield in my first over—an easy catch. Several other chances went begging, and my analysis was one for 100.

The worst was to come. In my opening over in the second innings—the first I had against Hobbs—he hit a ball back to me, and it badly split the third finger of my right hand, ending the game for me.

I was married at the end of my third season in Melbourne, and lived in the Prahran district. Here I laid down a turf wicket in my back-yard to enable me to practise, and I also trained a fox-terrier to bring the ball back to me. I taught him to lie still until I had bowled six or eight balls ; he would then go and fetch them back one by one, and lie down until I had completed another

over. This was one of the many useful tricks I taught him, and, later, he became well known wherever I went.

After I went to live in Adelaide, South Australia, he went out one morning. Apparently he was poisoned. At any rate, I never saw my friend again, although my son and I spent many hours tramping the streets in search of him.

It was with Prahran that I recorded my big successes in club cricket, my "bags" in four seasons being 67, 39, 68 and 56 wickets respectively. I had an enjoyable time there, and look back with pleasure to my associations with the club. During my time with Prahran, I got few opportunities of playing in better-class cricket, and my good performances with the ball went unnoticed.

I remember one very fine effort on the day the Sheffield Shield side was selected to play in the Christmas matches in Melbourne. We were playing Melbourne, whose team included Warwick Armstrong, the late Karl Schneider, Vernon

Ransford, and other splendid players. The wicket was wet, and I was not put on to bowl for some time, the idea being that I was useless on a wet wicket. But I was put on at last, and took seven wickets for 28.

When I returned to the dressing-room after the performance, one of the Victorian selectors congratulated me, but added: "I suppose you would rather be in the second eleven than the first?" "What a question to ask a keen cricketer!" I replied, and walked away in disgust. Nevertheless, it was for the second eleven that I was selected.

In my fourth season with Prahran, I was selected to go to Sydney with the Sheffield Shield side, which comprised 13 players—of whom I was the unlucky thirteenth. I came into my own, however, in the last Shield game of the season, played at Adelaide, when I secured one South Australian wicket for 12 runs in the first innings, and eight

for 81 in the second. Too late, as far as Victoria was concerned ! I had already determined to live in Adelaide, and to fight my way into the South Australian side.

It is an old saying that a prophet is without honour in his own country. The move was the best I had ever made, and was really the start of my career in "big" cricket. I am tremendously indebted to South Australia for the opportunity, which I accepted with open arms.

My success was immediate, and, in my first season with South Australia, I was selected for the Commonwealth in the fifth Test match, played in Sydney, against Arthur Gilligan's team, and took five for 45 and six for 36.

How well I remember this red-letter day ! The ground held a terrific crowd of about 40,000—Hobbs out for a "duck," brilliantly caught on the leg-side by Oldfield ; my own effort in helping to run out Sandham, and the

thrill of having the ball at last thrown to me by Collins.

Woolley, one of the best batsmen in the world, was 45 not out, and Jack Hearne was at the other end. It is impossible to describe my feelings as I started to bowl. After four runs had been scored from me, I threw up an off-break to Woolley, clean-bowling him. I could not at first realise it ; it seemed too good to be true.

Then success followed success, until, at the end of the game, I had firmly established myself in the list of candidates for the tour of England. Selection in the 1926 side brought realisation of the highest ambition of an Australian cricketer.

At home in Adelaide, I have a very fine picture of the fall of Woolley's wicket, my first in Test cricket, which I value highly. The New South Wales Cricket Association presented me with one of the balls, suitably inscribed with a record of my first innings performance,

besides which I received presents from my old friends at Prahran, and the Adelaide Cricket Club. The public of Adelaide subscribed a testimonial of more than £200 in recognition of my effort.

I have not kept a detailed record of my performances, nor do I propose to say much about averages, but one or two performances stand out in memory. One was that I secured 42 wickets—an average of seven a match—in the 1925-26 Sheffield Shield season, and that my worst average, though one of my best endeavours, was none for 175 against New South Wales, in Adelaide. That effort went a long way towards my inclusion in the 1926 team. I bowled remarkably well, and was congratulated even by my opponents.

In my fourth season in Adelaide, 1926-27, I took over the Colts team as captain and coach, and, in the past two seasons, have played with Kensington. Only once, it will be seen, have I played



SHOWING THE DELIVERY USFD TO RETARD THE PACE OF THE BALL OFF THE PITCH THE ACTION BEING MORE SQUARE ON



Photos Kinslock Si idios, 4 relative DEMONSTRATING THE SIDE ON DELIVERY OF THE BALL TO FACILITATE BODY WORK AND NIP OFF THE PITCH

more than three seasons with any one club—that club was Prahran—and I consider this fact largely responsible for my retention of form and improvement at the game. It has been the means of introducing variety into my cricket, and has helped to sustain my interest. It has widened my knowledge of the game by association with new players and new ideas. I have also been associated with young players at St. Peter's College, Adelaide, and the constant instruction of promising youths in various phases of the game has tended to impress on my mind the need of correct cricket tuition. I have, moreover, lectured on the game to various Adelaide audiences.

This chapter, then, has told of my many struggles, over a long period of years, for cricket eminence ; struggles that were crowned by the attainment of my goal—a place in the Australian Eleven—which, not so many years before, would have sounded like a fairy-tale to me. It goes to show what enthusiasm,

perseverance, and concentration, backed by a certain amount of ability, inherent and acquired, can do. It shows, also, that the highest honours may some day come to the humblest schoolboy cricketer, and, if this book helps anyone to go further on the path of cricket distinction, I am amply repaid.

LENGTH AND DIRECTION: THE TWIN
ESSENTIALS OF BOWLING SUCCESS

CHAPTER II

LENGTH AND DIRECTION: THE TWIN ESSENTIALS OF BOWLING SUCCESS

ONE of the first things a boy should be taught is what is good length. This should thoroughly be explained to him, so that he understands perfectly what it means.

A cricket ball has the power to swerve or to alter its course in the air before it pitches. It also has the power to spin, or change its direction after pitching. But once it has pitched, and its direction and pace noted, it has no further power to alter. It must, then, be obvious that the shorter it is pitched the sooner the batsman has the opportunity of judging what it is going to do, and the more time he has to decide what stroke to play, and to prepare for it.

Therefore, the bowler must try to pitch the ball in such a position that the batsman has the minimum amount of time to see the ball and decide what to do with it. It may also be noted that, a full toss, which is a ball pitched so far up that it reaches the batsman before it hits the pitch, may swerve or dip or have some peculiarity of flight.

This makes it more difficult to play than a short ball, which, after pitching, is easily followed by the batsman. What is called a good length ball is the most difficult to play. It pitches at such a length that it gives the batsman a minimum of time to decide what he is going to do. He does not know whether to play back or forward, and is often forced to compromise, playing what is called a "half-cock" stroke. This means that he starts to play forward, finds that the ball is too short, and stops his bat half-way, allowing the ball to hit it, without making any attempt to score —purely a defensive stroke.

In many cases he is playing "blind" in doing this, unless he gets well over his bat, and, should the ball alter its direction after pitching, there is a good chance of taking a wicket.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the short ball is the easiest to play, and, as a general rule, it is bad bowling to bowl short. The pupil should have this impressed upon him, and should be encouraged to keep the ball well up to the batsman, even to the extent of full-tosses.

There are, however, occasions when a short ball—otherwise a long-hop—will be the means of getting a wicket. Sometimes the state of the game is such that the batsmen are forced to play carefully, taking no risks. Good length bowling is simply playing into their hands, whereas an occasional long-hop will coax them to hit, and incidentally change their game. It is possible, in these circumstances, that they will mistime the ball, and the unexpected happens.

Length varies according to conditions.

For instance, the faster the ball the shorter it may be pitched to be of good length, and the slower it is, the further up it must be pitched. The reach of the batsman also has its effect on length. To a tall player, the ball would have to be pitched shorter, so that he would not, by the aid of his reach, be able to smother, or to make a half-volley of it.

This half-volley, by the way, is one of the easiest balls a batsman could get to score from. It is a ball which is struck by the bat as it hits the ground, and it should be a " gift " to any good batsman. Therefore, a bowler must avoid sending down a ball which a batsman could make into a half-volley.

This matter of the reach of different players, and their style, whether they play firm-footed or use their feet to get out to the ball, introduces a very important point for bowlers, and emphasises the importance of length and direction.

It has already been pointed out how length varies. Therefore, if a bowler can

continue bowling at the same batsman, he can, as a rule, keep the same length ; but, if this player scores a one or a three, the bowler is forced to bowl a different length to the other batsman. It is easy to see, if the batsmen are scoring odd runs, that the bowler finds it much harder to settle down to his length, and, with few exceptions, starts to lose his control of the position.

Length also varies according to the height of the bowler, and whether he delivers the ball from the top of his reach, or round-arm. Another factor that has to be considered is the condition of the pitch. The slower the wicket, the further up must the ball pitch to be good length, or vice versa.

Generally, a good length ball for an adult slow bowler is about four yards from the batsman's wicket, for a medium-pace bowler five yards, and for a fast bowler six or seven yards. A good way to decide is to assume a batsman's position at the wicket, and move the

The boy should be taught all these things and encouraged to study them, applying them to his own requirements. He must watch each batsman closely, studying him. It is here that his interest will become greater, as no two batsmen are alike. Consequently, the variety thus assured should be the means of keeping him keen and anxious to improve his knowledge.

I can quote no more striking example of the results to be obtained by length and direction, backed by subtle changes of pace and flight, than the performance of Jack White with Percy Chapman's team in Australia in 1928-29. His achievements rest on the solid bases of length and direction, and should be a wonderful incentive to young players to

develop their bowling on such lines. Even after break and swerve are lost, a bowler who can keep his length will always command respect.

A suggestion to create bowling interest in schools is something that would go a long way to improve this branch of the game. The first thing to do is to secure a correctly-marked pitch. Then place a white mark, either whitewashed cardboard or similar material, about three feet square, where a good length ball would pitch. The length would, of course, be altered for each type of bowler. Leave just the middle stump in, and another stump to bowl from, and the stage is set.

Announce that, say, in three weeks, a contest is to be arranged. Give each boy six or eight balls, and the one who hits the patch and stump most often is to be declared the winner. This means that the budding bowler will have some definite object in view, and his interest will go up tremendously. The spirit of competition among boys is most marked,

and to "dare" them to anything is the best way to get them to do it.

Therefore, for the period before the test is held, each will set about practising, and, in doing so, learn the two main attributes every bowler should have—length and direction.

From time to time, these little contests can be continued, thus sustaining the interest of the players. Perhaps other ideas may suggest themselves, and almost anything that creates interest and a competitive spirit will tend to sustain the pupils' keenness and improve their play.

The more attractive the practice is made, the keener the players become, and, although bowling requires a lot of hard work, it can be the most interesting branch of cricket. The batsman goes in, he may make a few runs or none at all, and then his active part in the game is comparatively small, whereas a bowler would indeed be unlucky if he did not get at least half a dozen overs.

In a match, note how a player acts

when first he goes in. Many players are extremely nervous until they score, and the bowler's object should be to try and keep them from scoring, at the same time using every effort to get them out. Many inexperienced bowlers bowl off the wicket when a new man comes in—a fatal mistake. Always attack, and incidentally by attacking—that is, bowling at the wicket—you restrict the scoring.

Frequently, I have seen bowlers who have had a couple of fours hit off them continue to bowl outside the off stump, thereby allowing the batsman to continue on the offensive. If the bowler keeps on the wicket, there is only one safe method of playing him—the straight drive. This is a difficult stroke, particularly against fast bowling, because the field can be so set that the batsman can penetrate the field only by taking the risk of attempting lofty drives.

When a new batsman comes in, have your in-fielders close enough to save the singles which the new-comer is most

anxious to obtain. Almost any batsman is terribly keen to "get off it," and, if you succeed for a while in preventing his scoring, it is quite likely that he will become desperate, and so throw away his wicket.

It is very important to attack. Do not waste your energy in sending down useless balls. Every ounce of vitality is valuable in the long game, and it should be every fieldsman's aim to save the bowler whenever possible, so that his task is made lighter. Throw the ball back to him on the full, as quite a lot of energy is used in the course of a day by the bowler's having to stoop to pick up the ball. Never let the bowler chase the ball. It should, of course, be one of the captain's jobs to see that his bowlers are not overworked in the field.

It frequently occurs in "big" cricket that a bowler worries a certain batsman, while the player at the other end is not in the least troubled. In this case, it would be policy for the player who is not

in difficulties to try and keep his companion away from that bowler.

A notable illustration of this class of play was the first Test match of the 1924-25 season, in Sydney, when H. L. Collins, then captain of Australia, "shepherded" W. H. Ponsford, playing his first international game, from the bowling of Tate. He kept the younger man away from Tate's bowling so much that he got an opportunity to become used to it, and went on to make a century.

This is where good length and direction, backed up by smart fielding, come in. A bowler must use every endeavour to have as many deliveries as possible at the batsman in question. It may be policy to allow either of the batsmen to get a single so that the man who is not at home to the dangerous bowler is unwillingly brought opposite him.

It is not always advisable to block a player's good shots if the bowler is confident of his ability to control the situation. It pays, sometimes, to make the

batsman cocksure, and he is often led on to his undoing. Likewise, it does not always pay to keep bowling to a batsman's weak point, for, by so doing, you may possibly give him practice on that stroke, and he learns, to some extent, to overcome his weakness. It is much better to attack the batsman alternately on other points.

It is a great asset to batsmen to score odd runs, especially singles. There is no surer way to get on top of the bowling.

If the bowler is accurate, and his field is placed well, he is enabled to settle down to a good length, and soon worries the batsman. It is very foolish to have the in-fieldsmen out too far, because the batsman is thus permitted to steal easy singles. Should the batsman have a good shot from which he is scoring, by all means put a man out to save the four, but do not neglect the ones. Fours will keep the batsman there for you, but ones provide him with sanctuary if you happen to be worrying him.

BALL V. BAT: SPIN, BREAK, AND SWERVE
AND HOW TO OBTAIN THEM

CHAPTER III

BALL V. BAT: SPIN, BREAK, AND SWERVE, AND HOW TO OBTAIN THEM

BOWLING may be divided into three classes—fast, medium and slow—the latter two being the most interesting. To be successful as a bowler, you must do one of several things. You must be particularly fast, or able to keep a good length and direction, or able to make the ball change its pace and direction either after hitting the pitch or in the air. My object here is to describe the various breaks, and how to master them.

This spin bowling, and, in a lesser degree, swerve bowling, is a most fascinating branch of cricket. Once a bowler is able to spin or swerve the ball, it is unlikely that he will ever lose his interest in the game. There are two

breaks—off and leg—and the ball may be made to gather pace or go more slowly after pitching, and to swerve in or to swerve out. In addition, the ball may be made to dip quickly, or to “float” on farther than the batsman expected.

The amount of break and swerve may be regulated, but it requires years of practice. The principle of regulation of break or swerve seems simple, but its application is much less easy. If a bowler wants to make the ball break from the leg, he must propel it in the direction of the batsman, at the same time turning or rolling the ball over with his fingers in the direction of the slips.

If he holds the ball so that the seam comes in contact with his first two fingers and his thumb, and holds his arm out at an angle of 45 degrees from his body, he will find that the seam will point practically straight down the pitch to the other wicket. As a further guide to what is meant, the palm of the hand

would be facing mid-on, level with the bowler's wicket. If the ball were twisted or spun, so that the seam went round like a hoop, he would find that the ball would not break, but go straight through. It would, however, have what is called "overspin," and, after striking the pitch, gather pace as the spin took effect.

Go a step farther by assuming the previous position, but, instead of having the palm of the hand facing mid-on, shift the seam so that it is pointing towards the slips. If the ball is now twisted, the spin will be in the direction of the slips while travelling through the air. Consequently, after pitching, it will change its direction to that in which the seam is revolving—towards the slips. We therefore have a leg-break, and so, the farther the wrist is brought round, until the palm of the hand is facing the batsman at the moment the ball leaves the hand, the bigger the break which can thus be controlled; the maximum is when the palm of the hand faces the

batsman, giving a spin directly across the line of flight.

Starting at the original position, and moving the wrist in the opposite direction, so that the seam will be pointing towards fine-leg as the ball is spun, will cause it to break from the off. This produces the googly or "bosie," named after the English cricketer, B. J. T. Bosanquet, one of the first to exploit this ball.

This latter position of the wrist is hard to assume, and it will be noticed that it will be necessary to drop the other shoulder so that the wrist can be brought into the right position. The ball is then allowed to come out from the "back" of the hand, whereas the leg-break comes out from the "front."

I have a very fine means of demonstrating this wrist-work, which I use in lecturing. It enables anyone immediately to grasp the importance of altering the position of the wrist to get the various classes and degrees of break. The value of this is that there is no necessity to

change grips, etc., the ball being spun the same way each time, and made to stop, gather pace, or turn from the leg or the off.

It is easy to see, for example, if I have the back of the hand towards the batsman, and spin the ball from right to left, that I get a leg-break. If the palm of the hand is towards the batsman, the opposite result—an off-break—will be obtained. The vital part played by the wrist is thus demonstrated.

I will now give a description of my demonstration methods. The ball is held between the second finger and the thumb, and I spin or twist it a short distance—say, eight or ten yards. The method of spinning is similar to that used in clicking the finger and thumb to attract attention. It is possible to make the ball do four different things with exactly the same spin, simply by holding the wrist in a different position.

Anyone can do this. You will find that if the back of the hand is held outwards as the ball leaves it, a

leg-break will result, and, with the palm outwards, an off-break. Similarly, an over-spinner will be produced if the back of the hand is outwards, and the hand pointing horizontally to the demonstrator's left. Vice versa, back-spin is imparted. [*The illustrations in this book show clearly what is meant.*]

This method of spinning the ball is particularly hard to apply to practical use, and I would not advise anyone to attempt it, the main difficulty lying in propelling the ball the full distance, and spinning it as it leaves the hand. It is possible, however, to bowl a leg-break with a googly action in this way, and also an off-break with a leg-break action. This principle can be applied, though, as previously demonstrated in my description of leg-breaks.

One of the most useful men in a side is a medium-paced bowler, either left or right-handed, and I would like to point out the value of the type in the hope that it might induce more players



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to take up this class of attack. At present, there is a great shortage of first-class medium-pace bowlers, this probably accounting, in no small degree, for the fact that the bat is showing such ascendancy over the ball. By medium-pace bowling, I do not mean the straight-up-and-down medium-pace deliveries with which we are so familiar, but medium-paced bowling with sting and spin.

A left-hander of this type would probably be given pride of place by reason of the fact that he is more effective against right-handed batsmen, who are in the majority. It is very difficult for a right-hand bowler consistently to control a leg-break at medium pace, but, on the other hand, one who bowls off-spin can generally be relied upon to keep a good length, the reason being that the wrist, in the case of the latter, is in a natural position at the moment of delivery. The left-hander's natural ball is a leg-break, and for reasons mentioned elsewhere, it is much more

difficult for right-handed batsmen. However, the right-hand off-spin bowler comes into his own against left-handers, to whom his natural break is most awkward. He is, therefore, the right man to put on when a left-hander arrives at the crease.

This does not mean that off-spin right-hand bowlers are not effective against right-hand batsmen. They are, and always will be, if they spin the ball and keep a length. This break is much easier to play for right-hand batsmen than left, because it is pitched on the left-hander's "blind spot."

The whole attack should be moulded on medium-pace bowling, with the fast or slow men providing the variations. My advice to aspiring bowlers is to spin the ball, and to keep on spinning it. The medium-pace man has a big advantage over his slower or faster brethren. His flight being much quicker through the air, the batsman is not able to use his feet as he would to a slower bowler,

and he is able to bowl for long stretches as against the average fast bowler's few overs.

In spinning an off-break, the ball is gripped firmly, with the index finger at the top, the palm of the hand facing the batsman when the arm is at the top of its swing. The ball is then twisted over from left to right across its line of flight, until, at the moment of delivery, the back of the hand is facing the ground.

The ball or sphere which is perfectly round, and has no seam, swerves because it is affected by the pressure of the atmosphere. This is dependent on the way the ball is spinning. Take, for instance, a ball spinning in a horizontal plane from right to left. That is, if you were to put a chalk mark round a sphere, similar to the seam on a cricket ball, it would be spinning round at right-angles to the line of flight, parallel with the ground. The ball would then be travelling much faster on the right side than

on the left, because it is spinning forward. On the left side, the ball is spinning back, and, consequently, not going so fast as on the other side. Hence, the different sides of the ball are differentially affected by air pressure.

It is, therefore, easy to see that the ball must tend to travel or swerve to the side on which there is most resistance. In this case, the most resistance is on the left, because the ball has a spinning motion backwards, and is travelling forward. Consequently, it swerves to the left; and, if the spin is reversed, it will swerve to the right. Similarly, top and back-spin operate the same way in their respective directions.

A cricket ball introduces something different again by reason of the fact that it has a seam raised above the main surface of the ball. Through the fact that the seam is in such contrast to the smooth, shiny surface—this varying as the ball becomes worn—it necessarily follows that it offers more resistance to the

atmosphere than the shiny part. Consequently, it swerves according to the way in which the seam is spinning.

Bowl a ball spinning over towards the slips as for a leg-break, the seam being gripped so that it touches the first two fingers and the thumb. The seam would then be pointing in the direction of the slips, and, with the atmosphere striking it in this position it would act as a rudder, steering the ball towards the slips—an out-swerve. Now grip the ball with the seam exactly opposite, spin it the same way, and it will swerve towards fine-leg—an in-swinger.

It is possible, however, for the seam to spin in such a way that, in the prevailing conditions it does not act as a rudder, and the ball swerves simply because it is travelling faster in one place than in the other, as, for instance, the previously-mentioned case of a ball spinning on a horizontal plane.

In the case of a ball bowled as for a leg-break, as previously described, with

the seam spinning like a hoop towards the slips, the top part of the ball is travelling faster than the lower part, and causes the ball to drop quickly. Hence the curving, deceptive flight of a ball from a slow bowler.

In baseball, they use for practice purposes a ball with the seam raised about an eighth of an inch, the idea being to enable learners to get the impression of swerve more easily by means of the contrast between the raised seam and the ball itself. This suggestion could be applied to cricket. Bowlers anxious to solve the mysteries of swerve could have a cricket ball made to order with the seam so raised, and would thus more clearly be able to note the effect of swerve.

Much useful experience can be gained by noting, particularly with this raised-seam ball, the effect of the wind. Young bowlers should also watch carefully to see how the swerve varies according to the way they grip the ball.

In swerve bowling, like other branches of the art, it must be the bowler's object so to regulate his swerve that the ball will hit the wicket. A new ball swerves much more than an old one, and it is vitally important that this advantage should not be wasted.

One of the most valuable assets of a bowler is the ability to flight the ball—in other words, the ability to make the ball appear to be coming farther than actually it is, or vice versa. A bowler who can do this well is in a class above the ordinary. He is able either to raise or lower the trajectory of the ball without losing his good length.

It is easy to see that, if a ball is thrown higher in the air, it will appear to be coming farther than it actually does, and the batsman may be tempted to play a similar stroke to a previous one, only to find that the ball has fallen shorter. Then he is forced to play a stroke he has not anticipated. For this reason, a batsman opposing a "flighty"

bowler has to play carefully, although it might appear from the pavilion that it would be easy for him to use the long handle, and punish the bowler so much that he would lose his length.

An important thing to learn in bowling is the correct delivery. The run to the wicket should be as short as possible to get the maximum power with the minimum effort, and should be perfectly straight. If training for a broad jump, the competitor would not think of running at angle to the line from which he took off, because he would lose half the momentum of his run, and would have to change direction at the moment of taking off.

The run should be measured off exactly after it has been decided which is the best distance, and the stride to the wicket should be even, gradually working up to the maximum pace at the moment of delivery. It should synchronise as far as possible with the arm movements, so as not to cause any



THIS HAND HELD VERTICALLY IN FRONT
OF THE BODY BACK OF HAND OUTWARDS
DEMONSTRATING HOW TO BOW THE
LFG BRTAK



THE HAND HELD VERTICALLY PALM
OUTWARDS DEMONSTRATING THE OFF
BRLK

hesitation or faltering in the run, which immediately causes the bowler's attention to wander from his task of getting the batsman out.

If, therefore, he can make his run mechanical, he will be able to give his undivided attention to the work in hand, and the fear of bowling no-balls will not worry him. Many bowlers fail to realise the importance of this, and I remember a Test match in which a fast bowler delivered every ball from fully a yard and a half behind the crease. When I asked him what his idea was, he replied that he did not want to bowl a no-ball. Thus was his effectiveness increased, because every ball of each of his overs was a potential wicket-getter. If, on the other hand, he had been in the habit of delivering the ball from so close to the crease that he had but the barest margin of safety, he might have sent down a number of no-balls, damaged his own confidence, given away runs, and, possibly, lost wickets. He was prepared to

sacrifice a degree of his speed in order to guard against them.

At the nets, it is advisable to bowl with a good margin of safety as far as no-balls are concerned. A bowler who, at practice, sends down no-balls—or, at any rate, balls of questionable fairness—is almost certain, in a match, to be mastered by his own bad habit, and his side will be the sufferer. Personally, I have been no-balled only once in my long career—in New Zealand with the Australian team in 1928—and, when I mentioned jokingly to the umpire that he had broken my “record,” he still maintained that I had gone over the crease.

The fast bowler is handicapped, as a rule, by the fact that conditions are against his sending down the ball at top speed at the nets. Practice wickets are rarely as good as match wickets, he has no desire to injure the batsman—especially a clubmate—and the man at the wickets is frequently distracted by

other players practising near by. This means that, when a fast bowler takes the field in a match, and applies that bit of extra pressure so necessary to success, he often finds that through his shortage of "all-out" practice, he strains a muscle.

A runner in training gradually works up to his top speed. *He* does not leave it until the day of the big event to produce his fastest burst. For that reason, I advocate that bowlers—particularly fast bowlers—should bowl at the nets, as a rule, without a batsman. They would then be left free to work up to top physical condition and express speed without the limitations imposed by the practice batsman's presence.

While in the act of delivery, the bowler should bring his body sideways on to the batsman as far as possible, so that the maximum of body-swing may be given, the weight being moved from the back foot to the front as the ball leaves the hand.

To secure variety, deliver the ball with the body more or less square-on to the batsman, this giving a tendency to make the ball come more slowly off the pitch through the absence of body-swing.

Another valuable point to a bowler is to use the full width of the bowling crease occasionally, thus making the angle of flight different. This is apt to make the batsman play outside the ball. Slow bowlers who turn the ball a great deal may also make use of bowling from wide out. It sometimes means the difference between hitting or missing the stumps.

An off-spin bowler, too, who finds that he is making the ball turn so much that it misses the stumps, should try bowling round the wicket.

Every bowler should found his attack on a good "stock" ball, with which he can depend upon accuracy, and, from it, to vary his methods and pace. The "stock" ball enables a bowler to retain

control of the situation while, at the same time, he is bowling well within himself. It leaves him that reserve of energy so necessary during a long stretch of bowling.

It is always advisable for a slow bowler to work against the breeze, which causes the ball to dip and swerve, together with other peculiarities of flight impossible to obtain while bowling with the wind. It also helps greatly to make the ball break.

It is not advisable to use more than one break, except as a means of introducing variety. In the first place, there is a strong chance that the bowler who does so will lose his length. That is the reason why the googly bowler, unless he is a champion, bowls erratically on occasions. It is very hard to control more than one set of muscles at a time.

Only once in a few overs should variety be sought by a change of break. Otherwise, it is apt to be expensive, as each change of break requires a different setting of the field, and, in consequence,

a percentage of the eleven are not fielding effectively through being out of position.

Do not become mechanical. Vary the height, pace, and flight of your "stock" ball. Do not be persuaded to give practice to batsmen if you feel disinclined, and your heart is not in the job.

Change of pace, as distinct from flight, is the art of bowling a ball which takes a little more or less time to get to the same place while, apparently, travelling at the same rate as the previous ball. The obvious bowling of a slower or faster ball defeats its own object by enabling the batsman immediately to detect the change. The less the variation, the less noticeable it is, and it may be produced in various ways, either by bowling from a yard farther back, letting the ball go a fraction of a second before or after the usual time, or by pulling the arm back at the moment of delivery, instead of following through. Slight variation

in pace may also be produced by holding the ball loosely.

The ball may be made to drop a little shorter, bowled a little faster, or slower, but, to good batsmen, the ball that takes a little longer than usual to get to the same place is the most likely to take a wicket. Personally, I do not favour the method of bowling from farther back than usual, as it might tend to make a bowler lose his length. It is far more subtle to vary the pace by means of the arm, with the same run to the wicket.

Some batsmen who appear quite at home to a particular pace of ball are often landed in difficulties by a bowler who tries a faster or slower delivery from that which had previously been timed to perfection. Instances of the value of such tactics are sometimes seen in lawn tennis. A player in a fast game may be winning easily, when, suddenly, the other changes to slow lobbing, with everything to gain and nothing to lose. Immediately, the opponent is forced to hit

the ball harder, and so, compelled to change his tactics, he may give the man who had been losing a chance to recover lost ground.

The same principle applies in cricket, and the bowler should try to force the batsman to play a game he does not like. In the same way, the batsman, using his feet, can sometimes, by attacking, force the bowler to change his style.

This point also illustrates the necessity of a captain's using from opposite ends bowlers whose types are as dissimilar as possible, so as to prevent the batsmen settling down to one particular pace.

A certain ball is bowled which, if not correctly played, pitches in such a position that, for the moment, it is lost to sight—in other words, it pitches on the "blind spot." This "spot" is generally made use of by a slow left or right-handed leg-break bowler. A ball pitching there and turning back to the off is the most difficult of all to play. The "blind spot" is caused when a batsman is side-

on to the ball and is, consequently, making use of only one eye. Thus, the stereoscopic effect produced through the use of two eyes is lost.

An example of this may be secured by standing perfectly still and looking at some cylindrical object—say a tin—a couple of feet away. If one eye is closed, a certain amount of the tin can be seen. Keeping the head still, and opening the other eye and shutting the first, it will be noticed that more of the tin is seen. Thus, with two eyes, you see more or less round the tin, and it stands out in bolder relief. The same principle applies to a batsman looking at a ball.

Thus, a batsman standing sideways on to a bowler, but with both eyes facing him, is less in danger from the “blind spot” than he who sees the ball coming with only one eye. The moral is to turn and face a ball on the leg side.

ABOUT FIELDSMEN: THE BOWLER'S BEST FRIENDS (AND WORST ENEMIES)

CHAPTER IV

ABOUT FIELDSMEN: THE BOWLER'S BEST FRIENDS (AND WORST ENEMIES)

FIELDING is by no means the least important branch of cricket, although it does not get very much prominence. More matches are won by good fielding, perhaps, than in any other way, and the bowler should be particularly interested in it, seeing that the fieldsmen are responsible for the larger share of his wickets. The bowler should appreciate the fact that, if he is the sufferer by bad fielding, so, too, is the team, and it is necessary that he should put himself out to assist both himself and his side by becoming a good fieldsmen.

It is not intended that he should go out in the field and knock himself out by chasing the ball needlessly, but it is

obvious that, if he is alert and a catch is hit up that is going to save him in the long run if he uses some of his energy in running to secure it, that he should do everything in his power to take the ball. Otherwise, it means a continuation of the innings for the batsman and more work for the bowler.

Fielding practice can be made quite attractive, and the joy of running at full speed with arms outstretched to bring off a great catch is as keen as that of getting wickets or making runs. The good fieldsman is sure to get preference, and he has the satisfaction of knowing that he is always popular with the public—a wonderful help at all times. Nothing is more enjoyable than to watch a brilliant piece of fielding, and those who see it bubble over with enthusiasm for the player concerned.

What roars of applause the player gets as he races for it, and, from what seems to be a certain four, gathers the ball in, and sends it back to the 'keeper ! It is

possible for anyone to become a good fieldsman, but it is not for all to become brilliant. Still, wonderful improvement can be made if the player is alert and a trier.

It is a good plan to have some fielding after net practice, doing just a little the first time, and increasing the amount as the hands become harder and accustomed to the knocks. Get a player with a bat to hit the ball along the ground and in the air. If he calls out the name of the player who is to take the catch or field the ball, each cricketer in turn may get practice at taking the ball and returning it to the wicket with as little delay as possible.

The ideal return is one with low trajectory, which lands in the wicket-keeper's hands at the top of the stumps. Should the fieldsman not be able to accomplish this, he should strive to throw the ball so that it will land in the wicketkeeper's hands in the same position on the first hop. By so doing, you

give the wicketkeeper or fieldsman a chance to secure a run-out should the return not hit the wicket.

The 'keeper or the fieldsman taking the return at the wicket should always have the stumps between him and the thrower. Should the ball be returned badly, and provided there is no chance of a run-out, always try to take the ball on the full, even if you have to go yards to meet it. It is much easier to catch in the air, and may shoot, kick, or break out of your reach if you allow it first to hit the ground. Always "back up" and take your position not less than twelve yards behind the man you expect to field the ball. This saves many costly overthrows and other errors in fielding. If you are the nearest fieldsman, go to the wicket if it is left unguarded.

Often, a wicketkeeper is seen intentionally to allow a ball to strike his pads, either when 'keeping or taking returns. This is not a wise policy; the ball might cannon off the pads and give

runs away. It is much safer to take the gloves to it, because, once in your hands, the ball can do no further mischief. The pads are there to protect the legs from knocks should you miss the ball with the gloves.

The best way to field the ball is to run in as fast as possible, and so to calculate your stride that your left foot—in the case of a right-hander—is alongside the ball as you are about to field it. Pick the ball up, swing the arm back, and you are in a position to throw without any preliminary “winding-up.” In this way, your knees do not interfere with the act of picking up the ball, and you are, at the same time, in a position to throw. It is well to remember that it is much more difficult to field a ball when stationary than when on the move, the reason being that, when running, you can cover such a lot of ground, or, if the ball takes an unexpected bounce, you can get more quickly into position. If standing still, you will not be in such

a favourable position, being more or less "anchored," if the ball does anything unexpected.

Another reason why it is very much better to move in while fielding the ball is that you need not throw it so far to reach the wickets, and get to it sooner. This is very important for an outfieldsman, who, if he waits for the ball to come to him, will probably give another run away if the batsmen are alert. For the men near the wickets, too, it is necessary to be on the move when trying to cut off runs. In this way, they can be of tremendous help to the bowlers. Every run saved is a run gained, and, if a batsman or a bowler neither makes runs nor gets wickets, he can still help a lot by quick and intelligent fielding.

Many wicketkeepers have a habit, when taking a "wide" ball, of jumping across with both legs, and are thus too far away from the stumps to reach them if a batsman be out of his crease. This is altogether wrong, and, as in batting,

the object should be for one leg to be moved across, the other remaining in its original position. The movement of the hands back to the stumps is then simple, as there is no preliminary footwork to go through. This applies equally to the off and leg sides.

A case in point often occurs when a googly bowler is operating. As it is possible to trick the batsman, so, in a lesser degree, because he has more time, it is on the cards that the 'keeper may be fooled. Suppose a ball were pitched outside the off-stump, apparently a leg-break for a right-hander, and the batsman went across, thereby obstructing the 'keeper's view. If the wicketkeeper jumped with both legs and the ball turned back from the off behind the batsman, in all probability he would be too far over to reach it. It might either go for byes or possibly result in a missed chance of stumping.

If the 'keeper went across with only one foot, he would still be in a position

to reach this unexpected ball. It must be obvious that otherwise he is more or less "anchored" for the time being, but, by having his feet a yard apart, he is balanced equally well in either direction, and can cover more ground. I myself have lost many wickets through 'keepers being out of position in this way.

A good means of obtaining slip-fielding practice is either to get the players in a circle—say, of seven or eight yards radius round the batsman—or get them to assume the ordinary slip positions, with the batsman in whatever place is suitable according to the pace of the ball. A batsman, in the first instance, stands with his bat horizontally in front of him. One of the fieldsmen throws or pitches the ball at the foot of the splice of the bat. The batsman then flicks the ball to one of the fieldsmen behind him. He, in turn, throws the ball back to the batsman, who then cuts it to another fieldsmen.

Similarly, when the slips are placed, one player has to assume the duties of thrower, being relieved at intervals for his turn at fielding practice. This method is much better than getting the ball off a roller or a slip-fielding machine, as it actually comes off the bat faster and in a more difficult manner than from the machine. As it resembles more closely match conditions, the value of this class of fielding practice is naturally higher. Always use both hands when possible.

The best position for slip fieldsmen is square on to the batsman, with the feet slightly apart, knees bent, in a similar manner to the wicketkeeper's stance, so that they are within easy reach of the ground. From this position it is easy to spring in any direction without preliminary movement of bending down. A player who stands upright cannot get down quickly enough for the low balls.

When fielding in a match, watch the batsman's feet, which give a good idea

of the proposed direction of his stroke. This enables the fieldsman to be on the move as soon as the ball leaves the bat. Sometimes a batsman " telegraphs " his intention of stealing a single, and, if he is closely watched, this may be prevented. Note whether the batsman is a good runner and anxious to steal runs ; in this case, field closer in. For a slow runner, field farther back, as the batsman who is slow between wickets will sometimes try to hit harder to make up for his lack of speed.

Always watch the captain and bowler ; be ready to move at the slightest sign. It is not always wise to advertise the fact that you have moved, and, should the skipper have to hold up the game to shift the fieldsmen, half the value of his strategy is lost. Never throw harder than necessary, and, if there is no chance of running a batsman out, do not throw. The ball may not go straight, and runs may be given away. This does not apply to the outfield, where the fieldsman must

get the ball back to the 'keeper with as little delay as possible.

In taking a catch in the outfield, it is best to hold the hands below the level of the eyes, in such a way that they will "give" under the impact of the ball, and not cause it to rebound from the hands. It is also better to have one hand lower than the other, so that a "cup" effect is secured. When in the outfield, stay well out in preference to too close in ; it is much easier to run forward than backward, and more ground can be covered.

When a "skier" comes to you in the outfield, it is better to wait until the ball reaches the zenith of its flight before moving. Then go as fast as possible so as to be ready for the ball in plenty of time, steadying yourself before making the catch. But it is foolish to dawdle at the start of the run ; a hurried effort makes the catch much more difficult. When a ball is hit straight to you, try to get slightly to one side. It is easier

to take it this way, and the hands "give" better.

Time spent in perfecting oneself in the field is well spent, and a player's value to his side enormously increased.

No matter how keen and clever a team may be in the field, nothing causes them more concern than skilful running between wickets. This is a phase of the game at which few batsmen are really proficient, though Hobbs and Sutcliffe are a striking lesson, and a few hints may not go amiss. Certain rules make good running between wickets quite simple ; their non-observance causes misunderstanding and loss of wickets.

The striker has the call for any ball hit in front of the wicket, in which case his partner should not take his eyes off him in any circumstances. The striker must look at his partner, but watch the ball and the fieldsmen, at the same time backing up and deciding whether to run. He should unmistakably indicate whether he intends to run. In the meantime, the

other batsman is watching him, but *not* the ball, and is prepared, having already backed up as far as he deems it safe, to obey his partner. If the stroke is worth two runs, the man running towards the ball tells his partner so while passing, and he in turn goes as hard as possible without question, touches the crease, and returns for the other run. Each batsman must have confidence in the other, and must be decisive. Hesitation and the fact that, sometimes, both batsmen call, cause nearly all the run-outs.

Should the striker hit the ball behind the wicket, it is his partner's call, in which case he should immediately watch him, taking no notice of the ball. The batsman must be prepared to back up and do exactly as his partner says. The partner must watch the ball, taking no notice of his co-runner, thus ensuring perfect understanding.

Never run past the wicket except when this is unavoidable, as, should an overthrow result, you would then perhaps have too far to go for the extra run.

THROUGH THE MILL: MY ADVICE TO
AMBITIOUS CRICKETERS

CHAPTER V

THROUGH THE MILL: MY ADVICE TO AMBITIOUS CRICKETERS

A YOUNG player must be observant. Every little detail is important, and worth studying. Above all, remain a student to the end. It does not matter what your success may be, you will never be able to say of cricket that you are unable to learn. Many a promising player has gone back through thinking he was at the top of the tree, when, really, he was only on a lower limb.

Never underestimate the strength of your opponents. There is always somebody popping up who will master you ; but study him, try to find out his weak points, and, above all, never give in. Grip the ball in different ways, and note the result. Anything is worth trying as

an experiment. Bowl from different positions at the bowling crease, but master length and direction. They are the foundation of your bowling.

It naturally follows that a boy at school will take most interest in the branches of sport encouraged by the masters or coaches. If, therefore, batting is encouraged and taught more often than bowling, it is certain that the boy will take to batting and neglect the equally important phase, bowling.

The best time to catch the pupil is when he is from eight to ten years old, and has not had much time to learn bad cricket habits. His mind is more receptive at that age, and his muscles and fingers more supple.

It is necessary to learn, while young, how to spin a ball, and always to keep practising it. It is not easy to detect what particular type of bowler a boy should be. Most boys like to get the ball and bowl it as fast as possible,

irrespective of whether they are physically suited to that type of bowling.

How often do we hear, after a match, the inquiry : " How many runs did you make ? " and not " How many wickets did you get ? " or, if the inquiry is made, it is " Who got the wickets ? " The boy who gets fifty or seventy runs is a hero, while he who gets several of the opposition's good wickets is hardly ever mentioned.

At present, one hears on every side about the ascendancy of the bat over the ball, and is asked why this should be so. One thing largely responsible for lack of interest in bowling is the prominence newspapers give to the batting side of the game, reports of which are mostly from the batsman's point of view, the poor bowler hardly being mentioned, except in a general way.

If the batsmen are finding it hard to score, or are getting out, the bowler gets no credit. I saw a very clever piece of bowling strategy in a game between New

South Wales and Victoria, which did not "get in the papers," but deserved a great deal of praise. A Victorian was batting to a slow bowler, who had a man straight in the outfield, another forward of square leg, and one midway between the wickets. The game was at a critical stage, when the other hand, a few runs lot, and, on the other hand, a few runs quickly got might have given the batting side the advantage. Impshifted the man not hit out, so the bowler sent right out of midway between the other two open, to it, leaving the middle position, which encourage the hit.

The batsman attempted the ¹ volley leg was a natural one to a half-volley by an off-break. Then the trap was sprung, the same off-break being sent up with the lead of action, the result being that instead to ^{the} k.ded, the ball being carried where intended, the reverse spin made it travel to the boy, the fieldsman forward of square leg. ^{the} Exi^{ble}, the batsman !

Now, this bowler did not get credit for

a good piece of work. Had the batsman hit the ball for six, he would probably have had a special paragraph. This sort of thing, therefore, explains why it is that nearly always only those boys who are poor batsmen take up bowling.

Net practice is also responsible for lack of enthusiasm in bowling, it being, in the main, arranged for the benefit of the batsmen of the club. Even bowlers who should not worry their heads over batting practice, except as a study to assist their bowling—of which more later—go to the nets to “have a slog.” Their turn comes to go in to bat, they throw the ball down, and in they go.

Of course, within certain limitations, net practice anyway is wrong, even from a batsman’s point of view. It does not teach the placing of a ball, running between wickets, or fielding, but we are forced to use it to obtain practice under the conditions that mostly prevail.

It is very noticeable that the arrangement of the nets at practice affects the

play of the individual. If the batsman is playing with the dividing net on his leg side, and no net on the off, his play will consist mostly of off strokes, the natural tendency being to hit the ball to the places where there is no net. This, of course, tends to make the player more or less careless, he is not playing in an orthodox manner, and, in most cases, he would not attempt to do the same thing in a match. The reverse is the case with a net on the off side. This may be remedied by each batsman having half his time on each side of the net.

It is not always convenient to have enough players to field, nor are wickets in the centre of the ground always available. However, if it be arranged intelligently, much useful practice can be obtained. For instance, if nets are set apart for bowlers, with marks at varying lengths for the different types of bowlers, a single stump to bowl at, and, where possible, a wicket-keeper to throw back each ball, thereby giving him also the

practice he hardly ever gets, except in a match—this would enable the bowler to work with a definite object, that of developing his length and direction.

This object is not so easily attained if a batsman is there to spoil the effect of the deliveries. Then, again, batsmen rarely play as they would in a match, which also makes it difficult for a bowler to practise under match conditions. If you tried, in the majority of clubs, to have nets set apart for bowlers, you would be cried down. The batsmen could not possibly be deprived of their practice !

Batsmen can more easily learn how to make strokes against inferior bowling than against good bowling, which they are forced to play more carefully, and do not, in consequence, get the same opportunities of practising strokes.

Therefore, if batsmen bowl to batsmen, and release the bowlers for their practice, much good will be done to both, and, occasionally, the recognised bowlers could have a try-out with the batsmen

in opposition. There is no doubt that practice carried out on these lines would be interesting, and of great benefit all round.

Temperament plays a very big part in a bowler's career, as it does in that of a batsman. Unless he can take a good "hiding" without being ruffled, he will never go very far in the game. There have been many very fine players who have failed to make good in "big" cricket, simply because they were not of the right temperament.

The slow bowler, in particular, must not allow anything to upset him. His is the type of bowling that invites being hit. Oftentimes the batsman is over-anxious, and then the bowler gets some of his own back. Above all, keep the ball up. Never allow yourself to bowl a long-hop, which is really a present of runs to the batsman, except in such straits that anything is worth trying.

It is the duty of all coaches to see that the young cricketer is properly equipped

with clothing and cricket material. Boots should be properly studded, this being vitally important. I saw a fieldsman meet with a very painful accident through omitting to see that his boots had nails in them. He was in the slips, and, in endeavouring to reach a catch that fell a little short of him, he slipped and had his index finger badly split, and was unable to play again for quite a time. Had his boots been properly sprigged, it is probable that he would easily have taken the catch.

A boy should have a bat of the correct size, otherwise his play is cramped, and he cannot play with it straight. Likewise, it is too much to expect a little fellow to bowl with a full-sized ball the full 22 yards. There is a small ball made which enables him to get his fingers round it, and, the weight being less, not so much exertion is required to bowl it.

In Australia, we are handicapped in the matter of shorter pitches on account of the fact that nearly all of them, except

in the higher grades of cricket, are of concrete. This does not enable the small boy to use a pitch of, say, 20 yards, no provision being made for the shortening of the wickets.

Likewise it is a big drawback to youthful players to have to learn all their cricket on concrete, over which a mat is placed, either of string, coco-nut, or canvas material. The ball bounces very much higher on concrete than on the turf and, generally, it is mostly back play that is adopted. Also, the ball will grip the matting better than the turf, and, in consequence, will break a lot more. On the other hand, on the turf in Australia, it is very hard to make the ball rise, or to make it break. As a matter of fact, it generally resolves itself into this : That after learning to play on matting, you have to unlearn everything and start all over again on turf.

Australians are at a big disadvantage in this respect, as it costs so much to

lay down and maintain a turf wicket. It is not like England, where the grass may be cut almost anywhere and rolled out fit to play on. Special soil has to be carted for miles and treated. A square of it several inches deep, and sufficient for several pitches, has to be laid down. This, of course, is expensive, and as there is no professional cricket as England knows it, only the larger clubs with a pretty good membership can afford a turf wicket. But a lot of enjoyment is to be had on matting wickets, even though the conditions do not compare with those on turf. Cricket requires a tremendous amount of concentration, and concentration demands enthusiasm. Anyone who enters wholeheartedly into the spirit of the game must get the benefit in the long run. If a prospective player can afford the time for regular and systematic practice, he will naturally benefit by it. It is a good thing to set out with a definite object, so as not to make practice

irksome. Vary the procedure from day to day, and do not let anything interfere with your purpose.

In any branch of the game, it is best to learn one thing at a time. As in batting it is necessary to hold and to lift the bat correctly, and move your foot to the ball before you attempt anything else, so in bowling your first objectives should be length and direction. It is a good thing to get a companion who is also interested to go out with you to practice, so that one may assist the other.

An expedient I adopted in order to get batting practice was to attach a ball, by means of a screw-eye, to a piece of string, and again to another screw-eye in the ceiling, so that the ball, when hanging suspended, would be about a foot or eighteen inches from the ground. The ball, on being struck sufficiently hard to take it just to the ceiling, returns faster, and you shape for the following stroke. If you find that the string hits

the back of your left hand—if you are a right-hander—you may be fairly sure you have played with a straight bat.

I would like also, while on the subject of batting, to suggest a method of instruction which I believe to be the best I have ever tried for teaching strokes. Either in the nets or open field, or in a room, with a soft ball, at a distance of about six to eight yards, bowl underhand for the particular stroke a pupil is being taught. This enables him properly to concentrate on footwork and batwork without having to think where the ball is to pitch.

Such concentration is the thing that counts, and, with regular practice of this sort, the pupil soon gets into the habit of making each stroke automatically without any conscious effort.

Although I would not suggest that bowlers should take too much pains over their batting, because it is naturally not advisable for a bowler needlessly to tire himself in an endeavour to make

runs, the ability to get them when needed is a very valuable asset. Personally I have never tried to make many runs for this reason—being well content with 30 or 40—but I do think that a bowler should make a thorough study of batting, because it enables him to pick out weak points in his opponents' play.

A case in point occurred in Adelaide just recently which will, perhaps, serve as an example. In the match concerned one side had scored 190, and the other had lost a couple of wickets cheaply. Before play started on the next day a member of the fielding side told me that if only his team could dismiss a certain player—by the way, a left-hander—he thought they would have a good chance of victory.

Happening to know this player pretty well, and through my habit of noting each little detail in my opponents' play, I immediately suggested to him a line of action which he agreed to adopt. On his side was a promising off-spin bowler,

and I told him to give this bowler "the word" to keep a good length on the off-stump, with the ball going away to the left-hander's off-side.

Knowing that this particular batsman never played a ball any farther round than mid-off, as he favoured on-side play, it seemed obvious that if he could be made to play against the break of the ball he might get himself into trouble. To make a long story short, the plan acted perfectly. He scored only seven runs. I have repeatedly seen bowlers "feeding" this batsman on the leg side, where he is tremendously strong, and, in an inter-State match recently, this went on right through his innings—a gift of 100 to 150 runs to his side.

It is instructive and interesting to stand at any practice and concentrate on some batsman, try to pick out some little fault or peculiarity of his, notice whether he moves his feet correctly, whether he is inclined to off-side or on-side play, and how he stands. If he leans

on his front foot he is probably a back player, in which case it should be obvious that you must keep the ball well up to induce him to play the game he does not like. Should he stand with his weight on the back foot, he is certain to favour forward play, and should be treated accordingly.

When practising, never bowl when feeling tired or jaded. Knock off feeling that you would like some more.

At times, a little fielding introduces variety into practice, at the same time improving a valuable asset. I am particularly keen on fielding, and, as I have said, for years played baseball during the Australian winter. Baseball, I consider, is one of the finest games a cricketer could play. It teaches many things that are valuable in cricket, such as judgment and quick thinking, throwing and catching.

At baseball a player is enabled to judge the difference in speed of a ball thrown or batted, as against a runner—

a very valuable asset if adapted to cricket.

I would strongly advise a bowler not to pitch at baseball, because it entails such a tremendous strain on the arms. Another baseball hint worth applying in cricket is that baseballers always "warm up" before a game by exercising the arms and muscles. This should be noted, and, if practised by bowlers and fieldsmen in cricket, the danger of a strained muscle is not nearly so great, especially on a cold day, such as often prevails in England.

Personally, I have always exercised my arms before going on to bowl, but it is advisable to do so the reverse way as a means of strengthening the arm muscles which, in bowling, are always used the one way.

I have done a tremendous amount of bowling in the course of a long cricket career—my record, probably a world's record, was 105 eight-ball overs, during a match between South Australia and

New South Wales—and I am sure that my practice of exercising my arm the opposite way has helped to rest and strengthen the muscles.

It is a very valuable asset to be able to relax completely during the game, and before and after it, those muscles that are not being used, so that they will respond the more readily when needed. Mental relaxation, too, is necessary. Some players whose nervous tension is above the average will find at the end of a hard day's cricket that they are suffering from sore or strained muscles, whereas a man who remains in a tense position only when this is necessary can keep going much longer without suffering unduly from strain.

The same principle applies in other sports; it is, in many cases, another form of stage-fright, and it will often be found that the man who is calm and quiet before he goes in to bat or field is much less likely to commit a blunder, out of sheer nervousness, than the player

with nerves on edge, who cannot rest and who cannot cease worrying on a big occasion.

I myself avoid discussing cricket and, after play is over for the day, I like to remove myself as far as possible from the atmosphere of the game. There is quite enough to worry about on the field without allowing the troubles of the game to "get you down" when you leave it. A book, a little music—anything that does not entail physical or mental fatigue—is a wonderful thing to help to keep you full of confidence and freshness ; but continually to be weighing up pros and cons, and not allowing the muscles to rest must, in the long run, take its toll.

Systematic exercise is also a fine thing to get the muscles into good condition, particularly at the start of the season, but it is advisable not to do too much at a time. A little exercise the first day, gradually increasing the amount as the muscles become used to the unusual strain, is the best plan.

It pays to adopt some sport in the winter that will keep the muscles in trim, rather than to practise cricket, which might lead to staleness. I recommend winter practice if it is desired to acquire some new ball or stroke, but be careful not to practise too strenuously out of season, as this might lead to staleness.

Too much match play or practice is liable to cause staleness, and when the symptoms show themselves it is advisable to play as little as possible or, better still, to give up the game altogether until the old-time vigour returns.

It is a mistake to allow a boy to bowl too fast. There is a possibility of strain, even if he is particularly well built. In order to keep his enthusiasm for bowling, do not let him become weary by doing too much at a time. Many boys have taken to batting because their keenness for bowling has been worn down through too much of it early in their careers.

A coach should not allow boys to play against bowling that is too fast for

them properly to handle. They become frightened, and develop a habit of flinching from the ball or "pulling away." It takes a long while for a man to recover from the moral effect of a bad knock, so that the consequences to a boy are even more serious. Immediately a boy is seen to flinch from a fast bowler, take him off, put on somebody who is slower, and, without making the reason for the change ostentatious, give him a chance to eradicate the fault.

Make boys wear proper batting gloves and pads that secure thorough protection, and see that pitches are properly prepared to minimise the risk of injury.

A good way to encourage and to improve the young idea is to select one or two boys from each school, and make them members of the most convenient first-class club in the district, so that they may develop in the right environment. Children are great mimics, and are very fond of imitating their elders. Thus, what they see done is impressed

on their minds, and, if they watch good players, it will tend to improve their own games. In the long run, the clubs who "take up" youngsters of promise will benefit by raising the standard of the game and increasing the interest of the public.

It is not possible for every boy to become a champion bowler, because natural ability is confined to a small percentage of prospective cricketers, but it is within the reach of most to become good average bowlers.

In conclusion, I should like to remind fellow-cricketers, especially the coming generation of players to whom this, my maiden effort in authorship, is addressed, that umpires, after all, are human beings. That fact is too often forgotten.

The umpire's job requires a tremendous amount of concentration. Think what this means, especially over a period of seven or eight days, such as Test matches take in Australia ! Think of the strain involved !

It is, therefore, the duty of every cricketer to make the umpire's lot as easy as possible. He gets many of the kicks and few of the ha'pence of the game, and it should be our aim to avoid harassing him by appealing unduly, or by questioning his decisions.

I think, however, that umpires should get together and discuss the interpretation of the rules, particularly the vexatious question of leg-before-wicket. As I told a group of well-known cricket followers — including Colonel Philip Trevor, Mr. P. F. Warner, and Mr. Percy Perrin—at Leyton only this month, I think there would be no need for the wider wickets introduced into English County cricket if umpires were instructed in the proper interpretation of "leg-before."

As an example of what is meant by l.b.w., take the case of a perfectly straight ball, bowled from directly over the stumps, which pitches so that the centre of the ball strikes a line on the

outside of the leg stump. It is obvious that there is more than an inch of the ball actually outside the leg stump. If, therefore, the batsman's leg is an inch outside the stump, and obstructs a ball of this kind, he is—or ought to be—out. There is more margin than I have mentioned, as the full width of the ball should be allowed for. The fact that this point is not generally recognised by umpires robs bowlers of many wickets.

But umpires, taken all in all, are a conscientious body of men, and we are much indebted to them for their help in making our great game what it is.

THE END

